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OO RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHCI #0046 0371209
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O 061209Z FEB 08
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1863
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0087
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME PRIORITY 0016
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2278

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000046

SIPDIS

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DEPT PLS PASS HHS-STEIGER AND HICKEY AND CDC-COX AND BLOUNT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [PGOV](#) [CASC](#) [AMED](#) [ECON](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: AI IN W. BENGAL-SITREP 17

REF: KOLKATA 43 AND PREVIOUS

1. (U) SUMMARY. As of February 6, no new districts were added to West Bengal's H5N1 map, but there were reports of unusual bird deaths in three AI-affected districts. GOWB resources continue to be shifted from culling to mop-up and disinfection mode. Observation and isolation facilities have been established in all West Bengal districts. The virus outbreak and the recent ban on poultry trading has had a severe economic impact on the state's backyard poultry farms, which account for 40 percent of the state's USD 1.3 billion poultry industry. Neighboring states, including Orissa, are culling birds as a preventive measure. End Summary

2. (U) For a second day, the GOWB Animal Resources Department did not designate any new districts in W. Bengal as affected by AI. GOWB figures still put five municipalities and 48 administrative blocks in 14 districts of West Bengal as AI-affected. However, reports of unusual poultry mortality came in from three affected districts: about 20 birds died in Murshidabad, 45 in South 24 Parganas and 66 in North 24 Parganas districts (these deaths actually occurred on February 4). Samples from the birds have been sent for testing and culling is continuing in these districts.

3. (U) The total number of Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) deployed stands at 298. Some RRTs are stopping their surveillance work and are now performing disinfection and sanitation in the affected areas. The number of RRTS involved in culling as of February 4 is 151.

4. (U) 24 human samples have been tested for H5N1 and 23 have reported negative, with one pending. All the 14 affected districts now have observation wards in place at primary health centers and isolation facilities at Sub-divisional level hospitals. Eleven persons were kept in these facilities until February 5; eight have been discharged. Twenty-three ventilators have been installed and three more are being installed.

5. (U) Initial assessments of the economic damage to W. Bengal's poultry industry are also coming. Some media put the size of the state's poultry industry at USD 131 million, but the chairman of Arambagh Hatcheries - one of the largest hatcheries in India - told Post that the actual size would be ten times more, i.e. USD 1.3 billion. The blanket ban on poultry trading and transport imposed by the GOWB (reftel) has impacted both the

organized poultry sector (USD 790 million) and the backyard farms (USD 510 million). Most of the infected poultry come from backyard farms and the impact of the outbreak will be felt most severely in these rural areas. Poultry industry representatives are likely to put pressure on the state government to review the ban.

¶6. (U) Preventive culling has started in Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa, and continues in Assam. According to the Indian Express, Orissa, which had resisted imposing preventive culling efforts, began culling a day after Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik met with members of his cabinet about the GOI directive.

¶7. (U) COMMENT: As the AI outbreak in West Bengal appears to be stabilizing, with no new reports of AI infections in the last few days, post will reduce the frequency of its sitreps.

JARDINE